

John Worth of Markfield (1720/1-1765)

Introduction

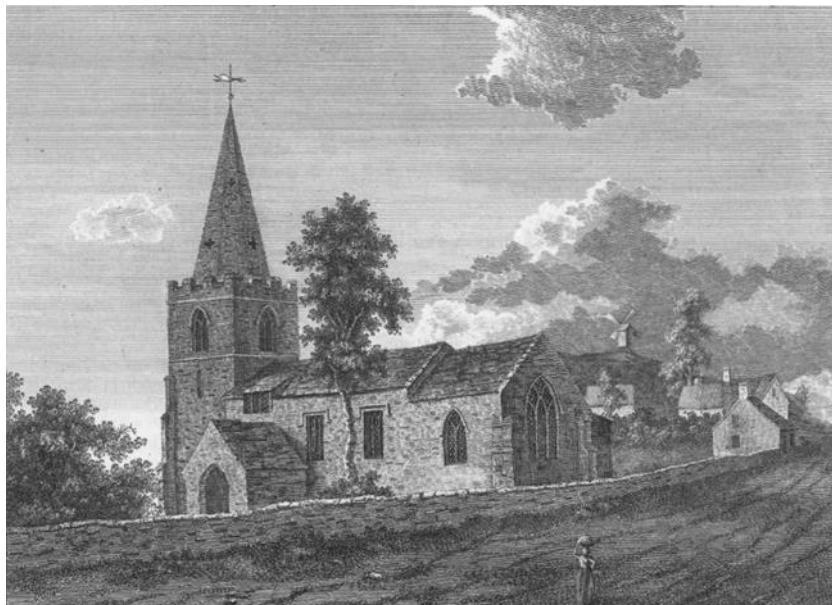
This paper tells the story of John Worth and his close relatives. The village of Markfield is some eight miles north-west of the centre of Leicester and now is also close to junction 22 of the M1 motorway. Appendix E shows the descent of my great grandfather Edwin Dalby from John Worth and his father Thomas.

Thank you to:

- Denys Worth (1935-2003) for sharing a vast amount of research and insights into the history of the Worth family.
- The National Archives and the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland for curating and making available parish registers, probate and other historical documents.

Internet links cited were checked on the date of this Introduction. If you find one that no longer works or its destination has changed for the worse, the Wayback Machine may be able to help you find the material that used to be there.¹

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St Michael Markfield²

¹ <https://web.archive.org/>

² *The history and antiquities of the county of Leicester* by John Nichols, volume 4 part 2, page 800, plate CXXVII (London 1811)
<https://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/digital/collection/p15407coll6/id/5897>

John Worth

The parish register of Thornton, Leicestershire includes this entry:

'Stanton christenings 1720 [i.e. 1720/1721] - Jno. son to Jno. & Ann Worth Feb. 6'

The father's name written as 'Jno' is a mistake. It should have been 'Thomas' for these reasons:

- Thornton parish register has the christenings of four children of Thomas & Ann Worth from Stanton between 1716-1719.
- No other Worth children have christenings recorded at Thornton between 1693 and 1726.
- There is only one other record of a Worth christening in the FindMyPast index of its scanned parish registers for Leicestershire between 1681 and 1770 with parents called John & Ann – '*Mary daughter of John & Ann Worth*' at Thurmaston in 1718.
- The will of George Worth (1716-1800) appointed as residual legatees '*my Cousins John Worth, George Worth, Edward Worth and Thomas Worth Sons of my Brother John Worth*'.³

Rothley parish register records '*1714 - Thomas Worth & Anne Hacket were married Octob: 5th*'. Rothley is about 10 miles by foot from Stanton-under-Bardon.

The only five children with parents named Thomas & Ann Worth and whose christenings have been found in Leicestershire between 1714 & 1857. All were all resident at Stanton and evidently offspring of the marriage in 1714:

	Baptised	Married	Buried
George	1716		1800 Markfield
Thomas	1717		
Edward	1719	Elizabeth Ward 1757	1780 Markfield
Michael	1719		
John	1720/1	Hannah Holt 1755 Susanna Holt (see below)	1765 Markfield

John's mother originated from Nailstone where, in his will dated 18 May 1722, George Hackett the elder left one shilling to '*my son Thomas Worth & Ann his wife*'.

First marriage

John Worth and Hannah Holt, both of Markfield, were married at its parish church on 1 April 1755. Both bride and groom made a mark. The witnesses were Robert Weston & Samuel Bacon. Markfield parish register records the baptisms of these children of '*John & Hannah Worth*':

- 8 February 1756 – John
- 29 January 1759 – George
- 25 May 1760 – Thomas

³ The word 'cousin' was often used to refer to a nephew or niece.

Despite the date of the third of these ceremonies, Markfield register also records the burial on 15 July 1759 of '*Hannah Wife of John Worth of Ulscroft*'.⁴ Hannah's tombstone survives in Markfield churchyard, with this inscription:

*Hannah Wife of
John Worth of Ulscroft
Died 1759 Aged 23 Years.
ALL you who come my grave to see
As I am now so must you be
For Death will come and Die you must
And like to me return to Dust.*

In view of her age and the fact that she died some 17 months after her son George was baptised, it seems likely that Hannah succumbed to the perils of a third pregnancy or childbirth. There is no record at Markfield of the birth, baptism or burial of a child of Hannah around the time of her burial; this would be consistent with Thomas having survived birth but his baptism being delayed for almost a year; the parish register does not state at what age the ceremony took place. An alternative explanation would be that by May 1760 John was remarried to someone else also called Hannah and they had produced a baby. For reasons discussed below, that is unlikely.

Death and probate

Markfield register records the burial on 4 March 1765 of '*John Worth*'. He had not made a will, so his widow applied for probate. A summary of the administration bond appears in Appendix A and of the text of the inventory of John's goods and chattels as Appendix B. The name of the widow is recorded three times as '*Susannah*' but she was evidently illiterate as she made a mark rather than signing her name. No record has been found of a person called John Worth marrying anyone called Susannah or Hannah in Leicestershire during 1759-1765.

William Holt, who made his mark as surety for the administration bond, was the father of Hannah who had married John Worth in 1755. '*William Holt*' was buried at Markfield on 24 October 1779. His will, made on 26 May of the same year, left £10 each to '*my grandchildren George, Thomas, Edward & Hannah Worth*'. The lack of a legacy to John, the oldest child of John & Hannah Worth, is understandable as John was already 23 years old and as the heir at law of his father inherited his landed property.⁵ Further evidence consistent with this grouping of siblings (but not mentioning the sister Hannah) can be found in the will of George Worth (1716-1800)⁶ which appointed as residual legatees '*my Cousins John Worth, George Worth, Edward Worth and Thomas Worth Sons of my Brother John Worth*'.

No record has been found at Markfield or in other Leicestershire parish registers indexed by FindMyPast of the baptism of children named Edward or Hannah Worth during the period

⁴ Ulverscroft was an extra-parochial place, a short distance north of the village of Markfield.

⁵ The will of John Worth of Peckleton, made on 29 July 1820 and proved at Leicester Archdeaconry Court on 28 April 1832, refers to property '*which descended to me as eldest son and heir at law of my late father John Worth heretofore of the said parish of Markfield yeoman deceased who died intestate*'.

⁶ Made 20 November 1799, proved 27 December 1800 at Leicester Archdeaconry Court.

between John's marriage to Hannah Holt and his death. However, the register of Bardon Park chapel, a Presbyterian congregation in the parish of Markfield, does include these baptisms during that period⁷:

- 2 April 1762 – *Hannah Worth Markfield*
- 1 June 1763 – *Edward Worth red House Whitwick*

Second marriage

There seems little doubt that Hannah (1762) and Edward (1763) were children of John Worth and a second wife named Susanna. A plausible explanation for the identity of that person and for the found lack of evidence of the second marriage emerges from the role of William Holt, who was surety for Susanna's administration bond and acknowledged Hannah and Edward as well as George and Thomas as his grandchildren. The most logical reason for these connections is that both of John Worth's wives were daughters of William Holt and that it was William's daughter Susanna (baptised 1733/4) who was the mother of his grandchildren Hannah and Edward. Details of Hannah, Susanna and their siblings are set out in Appendix C.

Before the 'Deceased Wife's Sister's Marriage Act 1907', obstacles stood in the way of a widower in England & Wales who wanted to marry his sister-in-law. The Marriage Act of 1835 absolutely prohibited such unions but previously the position was more complicated. The Church of England (which from 1754 to June 1837 had a monopoly of marriages in England & Wales, other than those of Quakers and Jews) officially forbade the practice but if a sister-in-law marriage did take place it was not absolutely void – the outcome depended on whether an 'interested party' launched legal proceedings. So, there was an incentive for such a second marriage to be performed away from prying eyes and, incidentally, be more difficult for 21st-century investigators to locate.

No record has been found in Leicestershire of a marriage or burial of Susanna Holt.

Markfield parish register records the marriage by banns on 4 November 1765 of a couple who were described as Thomas Bacon and Hannah Worth, a widow, both of this parish. The most plausible explanation for this is that the marriage was of John Worth's widow and that her christian name was inaccurately recorded with the christian name of his first wife. On that occasion, both bride and groom inscribed marks rather than signing their names, so neither would have been in a position to check the precise accuracy of the record in the register.

Bacon was not an uncommon name in the Markfield area, but it is probable that these baptisms recorded at Bardon Park chapel were children of the 1765 marriage:

- 23 August 1768 – *Sarah Bacon daughter to Thos. Cliffe Hill M[arkfiel]d*
- 20 October 1770 – *Joseph the son of Thos Bacon Markfield*
- 9 April 1773 – *William Bacon son of Thos. Markfield*

⁷ At that time, the Bardon Park register did not feature the names of parents.



Bardon Park chapel⁸

Appendix A: Administration bond for John Worth, 1765 (summary)

Bond by Susannah Worth of the Cliff-Siddes in ye parish of Markfield in the County and Archdeaconry of Leicester Widdow and William Holt of the Holleys in the said parish Farmer dated 2 March 1765.

The above bound Susannah Worth Widow and Administratrix of the goods, chattels and credits of John Worth late of the Cliff-Sides aforesaid Farmer deceased agreed to make an inventory of his goods, chattels and credits and provide it to the Registry of the Archdeaconry Court by the last day of May next and an account of her administration by the last day of February 1766.

[signed] The mark of Susannah Worth (x)

[signed] The mark of William (x) Holt.

The inventory had already been drawn up and is set out as Appendix B.

The account of the administration of the estate does not appear to survive.

⁸ Photograph courtesy of Tim Glover via Wikimedia Commons under CC BY-SA 2.0 Generic licence.
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/deed.en>

Appendix B: John Worth's inventory, 1765

26th February 1765

An Inventory of the Goods and Personal Estate of John Worth late of Markfield Farmer Deceased.

	£	s	d
Purse and Apparel	100	10	0
Goods in the House	5	0	6
Goods in the Parlour	4	0	6
Do. In the Chamber	0	7	0
Six Horses and Mares	12	12	0
Two Cows and one Calf	7	10	0
Thirty Sheep and Lambs	7	10	0
Total	137	10	0

Appraised by us
John Adnut Senr
William (x) Hoult his mark

Appendix C: William Holt and his family

Markfield parish register records the baptism on 24 October 1701 of '*William son to William & Ann Holt*'.

Ashby de la Zouche parish register records the marriage by banns on 2 October 1700 of '*William Hoult of Markfield & Ann Litherland of Ashby*'. Only three children of the marriage have been identified, all of whom were baptised at Markfield:

	Baptised	Married	Buried
William	1701	Sarah Reynolds 1726	1779
Walter	1704	n/a	1711/2
Elizabeth	1712/13		

The register of Barkby, some eight miles from Markfield, records the marriage on 14 September 1726 of '*William Holt of Markfield & Sarah Reynolds of the North end of Thurmaston in this Parish*'. Their children were:

	Baptised/born*	Married	Buried	In father's will
William		n/a	1728	
William	1729			Yes
George	1731/2			Yes
Susanna	1733/4 ⁹	John Worth (see above)		
Walter	c.1734* ¹⁰		1828	Yes
Hannah	c.1736 ¹¹	John Worth 1755	1759	
Joseph	1739			Yes

⁹ Markfield parish register records as '*Susanna daughter to Wm & Sarah Bolt*' [sic].

¹⁰ See Appendix D.

¹¹ Buried 15 July 1759 – her tombstone states she was 23 when she died.

When William Holt made his will on 26 May 1779, he included provision for his wife Sarah. However, she was the first of the couple to expire – Markfield parish register records the burial on 15 August 1779 of 'Sarah wife of Wm Holt'. William followed her to the grave on 28 December of the same year.

Appendix D: Testimony of Walter Holt, 1825

The following extract is part of a lengthy report published in the Leicester Mercury about the re-trial of a dispute as to whether *'the Rector of Markfield, who was the defendant, was entitled to the tithes within his parish, or whether 118 acres of land in that district, called the Cliff Slade, was not exonerated in consequence of the annual sum of 4s.10d having been paid, by way of a modus, to Charles March Phillipps, Esq. and his predecessors, for centuries past, and who had given a valuable consideration for the same'*.

Bacon and others v. Williams, clerk. - This was an issue out of the Court of Chancery

*'Several witnesses were called to prove the payment of the sum annually, as a rate tithe, or modus; and among them Walter Holt, aged 91, who stated that he was born at Markfield and had lived there all his life; his father had also lived to the age of 80, and between them they could trace back 150 years. Witness had gathered tithes, but not for the present rector. - His (witness's) father died about fifty years ago, he then became master-man and had continued to do so; had gathered tithes for two rectors since, but never heard of any being collected for the Cliff Slade, nor his father before him. Witness left off collecting tithes when the present rector came to Markfield. Mr. Phillipps always received 4s. 10d. from Cliff Slade annually. Witness is the oldest man where about.'*¹²

The age of 91 reported in August 1825 is fairly consistent with that of 93 recorded when Walter Holt was buried at Markfield on 28 June 1828. Both of the stated ages indicate that Walter was born about 1734, however a baptism record that corresponds with the ages has not been found.

¹² Leicester Mercury, 13 August 1825, page 2, column 2.

Appendix E: Descent of Edwin Dalby from Thomas Worth

Thomas WORTH married 1714 Rothley buried 1741/2 Thornton	Anne HACKETT born c.1692 Nailstone
John WORTH baptised 1720/1 Thornton buried 1765 Markfield	Susanna HOLT (2nd wife) baptised 1733/4 Markfield
Edward WORTH baptised 1734 Bardon Park married 1787 Nailstone died 1848 Markfield	Sarah NEWBERRY baptised 1763 Nailstone died 1827 Markfield
Ann WORTH born 1794 Markfield married 1820 Blaby died 1874 Leicester	William DALBY born 1796 Blaby died 1856 Leicester
Francis DALBY born 1821 Blaby married 1843 Leicester died 1902 Philadelphia	Lydia SMITH born c.1820 Leicester died 1893 Leicester
Edwin DALBY born 1864 Birmingham married 1888 Leicester died 1936 Streatham	Mary FEAREY born 1866 Heckington died 1910 Brixton